

**In the claims:**

Please amend the claims as follows:

A3  
3. (Amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein said strain is capable of producing both vanillic acid and vanillin from ferulic acid, the ratio thereof being pH-dependant; and wherein a pH is selected and maintained which relatively ~~favo[ulrs] accumulation of vanillin.~~

A4 5/6. (Amended) A method according to claim 1 including a preliminary step of obtaining said first composition comprising ferulic acid from a plant material by a process comprising:

(a) treating the plant material to produce a solution containing a ferulic acid ester; and

(b) treating said solution with an enzyme composition having ferulic acid esterase activity under conditions such that ferulic acid esters are converted into ferulic acid.

A3  
9. (Amended) A method according to claim 6 wherein in step (a) the plant material is treated with a solution containing citric acid.

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12. (Amended) A method according to claim 6 wherein step (b) employs an enzyme derived from a species of *Aspergillus* or *Humicola insolens*.

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17. (Amended) A process according to claim 14 wherein said ferulic acid ester is provided in the form of plant material, said microorganism acting directly on said plant material.

18. (Amended) A method according to claim 14 wherein said second composition is treated with one or more further microorganisms for converting said vanillic acid into

vanillin.

*A8*  
21. (Amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein said conversion into vanillin is effected in an aqueous phase which is contacted with an organic phase which extracts said at least one desired component.

22. (Amended) A method according to claim 1 including a preliminary step of obtaining a strain of microorganism for use in the method of claim 1 comprising screening a multiplicity of colonies by means of a reagent suitable for detecting aldehydes.

*A9*  
23. (Amended) A genetically engineered organism which has been transformed with nucleic acid derived directly or indirectly from a strain selected from the group consisting of *Pseudomonas putida* NCIMB40988 or mutant thereof, *Rhodotorula glutinis* IMI379896 or mutant thereof, *Penicillium chrysogenum* IMI379900 or mutant thereof, *Aspergillus flavus* IMI379895 or mutant thereof, *Aspergillus niger* IMI379904 or mutant thereof, *Pseudomonas putida* IMI382568 or mutant thereof, *Aspergillus fumigatus* IMI379902 or mutant thereof, and *Micromucor isabellinus* IMI379893 or mutant thereof said genetically engineered organism being capable of converting ferulic acid ester into vanillic acid.

33. (Amended) An extract or enzyme(s) isolated from an organism of claim 32.

Please add the following new claims:

*A10*  
34. (New) A method according to claim 4 including a preliminary step of obtaining said first composition comprising ferulic acid from a plant material by a process comprising:

(a) treating the plant material to produce a solution containing a ferulic acid ester; and

(b) treating said solution with an enzyme composition having ferulic acid esterase activity under conditions such that ferulic acid esters are converted into ferulic acid.

35. (New) A method according to claim 34 wherein said plant material is selected from maize, wheat, sugar beet and rice materials.

36. (New) A method according to claim 35 wherein said plant material comprises fiber, bran or straw.

37. (New) A method according to claim 34 wherein in step (a) the plant material is treated with a solution containing citric acid.

38. (New) A method according to claim 37 wherein said plant material is treated in the temperature range 50-250°.

39. (New) A method according to claim 34 wherein the plant material comprises sugar beet fiber and step (a) involves heating in water.

40. (New) A method according to claim 34 wherein step (b) employs an enzyme derived from a species of *Aspergillus* or *Humicola insolens*.

41. (New) A method according to claim 38 wherein the enzyme is derived from *Humicola insolens* and treatment is effected substantially in the pH range 6-7.

42. (New) A method according to claim 4 wherein said